

1945
NEW ZEALAND

AIR DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON THE) FOR THE YEAR 1944-45

Presented in pursuance of Section 7 of the Air Department Act, 1937

REPORT BY THE HONOURABLE F. JONES MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE AIR DEPARTMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1945

MR. SPEAKER,—

I have the honour to present to Parliament the report of the Air Department for the year ended the 31st March, 1945.

The report covers the work of the Royal New Zealand Air Force in outline only, and also gives a brief *résumé* of civil aviation activities during the period.

I wish to express my grateful appreciation of the energy and enthusiasm with which the members of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and civilian members of the Air Department have discharged their duties in this the sixth year of the war.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1945

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on the Royal New Zealand Air Force for the year ended 31st March, 1945.

The chief features of the past year's activities have been—

- (a) The termination of the Empire Air Training Scheme, which has resulted in the cessation of the flow of aircrew personnel to Great Britain for service with the Royal Air Force ; and
- (b) The conduct of operations by the R.N.Z.A.F. squadrons in the South and South-west Pacific against the Japanese. The level of these operations has been maintained with success, and squadrons have moved to forward operational bases in the Bismarcks area.

There has been a considerable reduction in the total strength of the R.N.Z.A.F. in New Zealand.

OPERATIONS

The past year has been notable for the manner in which operational squadrons of the R.N.Z.A.F. continued successful operations against the Japanese and maintained steady advancement and movement forward to new locations.

During the year the South Pacific Command was declared to be a garrison area, and it was decided that the responsibility for protection of these British possessions should be accepted by the R.N.Z.A.F., but squadrons surplus to these requirements would be made available to C.-in-C. South-west Pacific Area for operations. The garrison commitment has been steadily reduced during the year, until, by March, 1945, authority had been given for the release of all fighter and bomber-reconnaissance squadrons from the area, leaving only the two flying-boat squadrons in the South Pacific area.

The role of our fighter squadrons, in particular, has undergone a considerable change. Whereas it was one of air combat, our squadrons are now being used almost solely in providing air support for ground forces engaged against enemy ground forces and installations. The support being given to the 1st Australian Army in the Bismarcks and to the 2nd Australian Corps on Bougainville is in keeping with the best traditions of the R.N.Z.A.F. and has won unstinted praise from the Australian Army.

With the extension of the activities of the R.N.Z.A.F. farther and farther from New Zealand, the need for additional air transport became very pressing. The fact that fewer ships have been routed via New Zealand since American Forces are no longer based in this country has necessitated the transport of practically all of our personnel by air to and from the theatre of operations. An additional transport squadron was accordingly formed, and both squadrons have been given additional aircraft. During December the fleet was further augmented by the arrival from the United Kingdom of four Sunderland flying-boats, which were formed into the Flying-boat Transport Flight based on Mechanics Bay.

Regular schedule services are now being operated from New Zealand to Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, the Solomons, and for considerable distances north and west of this area. Services are also operated to Fiji, Tonga, the Ellice Group, Western Samoa, and American Samoa. In addition to regular services, many special flights of an urgent courier nature are operated between New Zealand and practically every flying-field in the South Pacific area. Since the inception of the R.N.Z.A.F. Air Transport Service there has been no accident involving injury to a passenger. During the year just ended pilots in our transport squadrons covered over five million miles.

Our Operational Training Units have continued to function under the general plan already laid down, with some changes designed to meet changing personnel requirements in the forward area and, where possible, to increase the efficiency of training units. In the field of gunnery training new methods were introduced, with gratifying results.

During the year the Flying Control organization was brought under the control of the Directorate of Operations. A School of Flying Control was established at New Plymouth, additional control centres were set up, and, generally speaking, increased emphasis given to measures designed to provide for the safety of aircraft engaged in all types of flying.

Operational statistics are shown at Appendix A of this report.

ORGANIZATION AND STAFF DUTIES

In the year under review major changes in the organization of the R.N.Z.A.F. have been carried out. The principal items of organization have been the transference of additional operational squadrons to the Pacific and a complete revision of flying training due to the termination of New Zealand's contribution to the Empire Air Training Scheme.

The planning of organization and administrative details resultant from these changes formed the major activity in this Directorate during the period.

With the transfer of the Operational Squadrons to the Pacific, decentralization of administration in New Zealand was considered unnecessary, and the two remaining Group H.Q.s in New Zealand located at Auckland and Christchurch were disbanded. All units in New Zealand, and also the Fiji Area and Norfolk Island, are now under the direction of Air Department.

Very close attention has been paid to the economy of man-power by constant review of the strength of units and control of establishments, particular attention being paid to reducing strengths of New Zealand units to a bare minimum. The total reduction in New Zealand strength from June, 1944, when a complete survey was made, to 31st March, 1945, was 5,932. The greater portion of this reduction was due to the closing of stations rendered unnecessary by termination of the Empire Air Training Scheme. The change in administration by disbandment of Group Control is also responsible for considerable saving, but has made necessary the retention of a substantial staff in Air Department.

An Establishment Committee was set up in Air Department under the chairmanship of the Chief of the Air Staff for the purpose of determining matters of establishment policy. Establishments which are promulgated each month and amendments which become necessary are submitted to the Establishment Committee for confirmation.

A major change in the organization of the R.N.Z.A.F. in the Pacific was carried out by the formation of New Zealand Air Task Force; this organization was formed in anticipation of the assumption of operational responsibility for the area at present controlled by Commander Aircraft Northern Solomons (Comairnorsols). It is planned on a basis that will enable assumption of administration and logistic responsibility at the appropriate time. The long-range planning of this is to keep the Administrative H.Q. as close to the operational area as possible and to reduce base areas to a minimum requirement for lines of communication.

A summary of changes in New Zealand units carried out during the year is as follows: Northern Group H.Q., disbanded; Southern Group H.Q., disbanded; No. 1 Port Depot and Mangere, closed and reformed at Remuera; Delta Station, closed; Ashburton, closed; Tauranga, closed; Levin, closed; Rongotai, closed for training; accommodation of Air Department staffs, Non-effective Pool, and transient personnel opened at Anderson Park.

Close liaison has been made with overseas H.Q. Missions and Liaison Offices. With the increasing number of R.N.Z.A.F. personnel in India, approval of the establishment of a Liaison Office in that country was obtained. A Liaison Office was also established at Noumea absorbing the existing Port Depot staff.

EMPIRE AIR TRAINING SCHEME

Following a gradual reduction of intakes from September, 1944, the Empire Air Training Scheme was officially terminated on 31st March, 1945. New Zealand's quota of contributions of aircrew to this scheme has been fully maintained throughout the period of its existence, and the figures are remarkable for a country with such a relatively small population.

PERSONNEL

Although the requirements of the squadrons in the Pacific area and the formation of the New Zealand Air Task Force, as agreed to by War Cabinet, necessitated an increase in the number of personnel in that area, this was more than offset by the projected cessation of the Empire Air Training Scheme which permitted the closing of a number of stations in New Zealand. The overall reduction resulting from this and other factors approximates to 12½ per cent. of the strength of the R.N.Z.A.F. as at 31st March, 1944.

AWARDS

Details of awards to New Zealand air personnel granted annually during the period 1st April, 1940, to 31st March, 1945, are shown at Appendix B of this report.

CASUALTIES

Particulars of casualties to personnel both overseas and in New Zealand are tabulated at Appendix C of this report.

TRAINING ORGANIZATION

(a) *Flying Training.*—In September, 1944, the United Kingdom authorities decided that no further drafts of aircrew need be sent to that country from New Zealand. As a result the training organization had to be curtailed to meet Pacific requirements only, and the large number of surplus aircrew in various stages of training had to be absorbed into the reduced training organization as rapidly as possible. This necessitated a complete revision of flying training policy and organization, and the opportunity was taken to effect certain improvements in the training system with the aim of attaining quality rather than quantity in our aircrew.

The closing-down of Southern Group Headquarters in October, 1944, transferred the majority of work hitherto performed by that headquarters to Training Branch at Air Department.

The success achieved by our aircrew in every theatre of war reflects great credit on all those responsible for flying training.

(b) *Technical Training.* Although the numbers trained show a decrease during the past year, technical training has covered a greater number of trades than usual, and a high standard maintained despite the lack of technical background of the personnel under training.

(c) *Physical Education and Recreational Training.*—Under the supervision of trained personnel a marked improvement in physical fitness and physique has been effected during the year. In view of the liability of all fit personnel to serve overseas, a determined effort has also been made to teach as many as possible to swim. The success achieved in this direction is reflected in the fact that over 400 officers and airmen have qualified for Royal Life Saving Society awards.

(d) *General and Service Training.* This aspect of training has been maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Service.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

General educational facilities have been greatly extended over the last year, particularly for personnel in the Pacific and Great Britain. Education Officers are now established at all Pacific stations and their activities extended to include National Patriotic Fund activities, supply and screening of motion-picture films, and in some cases the publication of a station newspaper.

AIR TRAINING CORPS

The strength of the Air Training Corps showed a decrease during the year of approximately 10 per cent. This was primarily due to a change of policy regarding the percentage allowance of school strengths for the A.T.C. Mobilization into the R.N.Z.A.F. also dropped considerably due to the curtailment of aircrew enlistments over a period of seven months.

The supply of instructional equipment has been excellent, enabling all units to be fully provided. This has been a big factor in maintaining the interest of the Cadets.

WOMEN'S AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

Policy changes permitted a considerable reduction in strength of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during the year. Members of the Auxiliary have continued to discharge their duties efficiently, and have proved a valuable part of the R.N.Z.A.F. The state of accommodation and equipment has been maintained at the previous high standard, and every precaution has been taken to safeguard the health and general welfare of all members of the Auxiliary.

MEDICAL BRANCH

The past year has seen a stabilizing in the size of the medical service. There has been, at the same time, a period of development and alteration of existing services.

The health of the R.N.Z.A.F. in both New Zealand and the Pacific area has been consistently good.

DENTAL SERVICES

The routine dental examination and treatment for all R.N.Z.A.F. personnel has been steady and continuous on all Stations during the last twelve months.

WORKS AND BUILDINGS

The general organization for maintenance and construction remained unaltered throughout the year. In addition to carrying out miscellaneous construction and building work of importance, works squadrons in New Zealand served as manning pools for works squadrons overseas. These latter provided works services for R.N.Z.A.F. units in the Pacific, whose sawmill units in the forward area have achieved remarkable results in their daily output.

EQUIPMENT

The reduction in the number of stations in operation in New Zealand has had a consequent overall effect upon the general supply position. Overseas units have also been faced with a change of procedure resulting in the necessity for New Zealand supplying an increased amount of equipment.

The general supply situation throughout the year has been satisfactory, but at times supplies of certain items have been critical. Such shortages have been universal, but the R.N.Z.A.F. has received a very reasonable proportion of its demands.

Aircraft deliveries were satisfactorily maintained.

Considerable improvement to the operational and safety equipment issued to aircrew has been effected during the year, which greatly enhances the prospect of survival in the event of their having to abandon their aircraft.

Liaison has been established with various authorities for the disposal of equipment surplus to R.N.Z.A.F. requirements.

MAINTENANCE

Changes in policy throughout the year had their effect on maintenance organization and placed a heavy administrative burden thereon. Nevertheless, the result has been, generally, an improvement in that organization.

SUPPLY

Aviation fuel and oil supplies have been satisfactorily maintained.
Messing on R.N.Z.A.F. stations continues to be of a high standard.
A reduction of mechanical transport and marine craft has been possible during the year.

AERONAUTICAL PRODUCTION

Local manufacture of a wide range of aeronautical, electrical, and ground equipment continued throughout the year, and, in addition, repair and reconditioning of aero tires and tubes has been successfully undertaken by local contractors.

The manufacture of new elementary training aircraft was terminated during the year, but repairs and overhauls of this type of aircraft and the production and repair of wooden propellers and aircraft accumulators has been continued by local contractors.

SIGNALS

During the year ended 31st March, 1945, the increased R.N.Z.A.F. operational responsibilities in the Northern Solomons and Bismarek area, and the accompanying decreased activity within New Zealand, has been reflected in the signal organization. Signal planning has been directed towards stabilizing the New Zealand organization and to developing that in the forward area to meet the tactical requirements of the New Zealand Air Task Force. With the increase in scheduled air transport activities between New Zealand, United States of America, Australia, British possessions in the South Pacific, and also in support of our Forces overseas, considerable planning has been necessary for the provision of the requisite radio navigational and communication facilities.

METEOROLOGICAL

Apart from increased overseas commitments consequent on the establishment of the New Zealand Air Task Force, there has been no important change in the meteorological service during the year, and it still continues to provide all weather information required for the Armed Services and the civil community.

Late in 1944 the restrictions and the dissemination of weather information were relaxed to the extent of permitting the transmission of weather reports by radio in plain language, but the broadcasting of forecasts is still prohibited.

BAND OF THE R.N.Z.A.F.

As in past years, the Band of the R.N.Z.A.F. has continued to provide entertainment for Service personnel, and assist in campaigns for recruiting, National Patriotic Funds, and war loans. In the middle of the year it undertook a tour of Stations in the Pacific. Its popularity was acclaimed by both American and New Zealand forces and proved a considerable factor in the maintenance of morale.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In addition to the carrying-out of its usual functions, the Directorate of Public Relations introduced facilities for personnel serving in the Pacific for the purchase of official photographs for despatch to relatives by the Directorate. This service is universally appreciated, and sales month by month have steadily increased.

CONCLUSION

I desire to express my thanks and appreciation to all members of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and to the civilian staff for their efforts during the past year.

I have, &c.,

L. M. ISITT, Air Vice-Marshal,
Chief of the Air Staff.

APPENDIX A.—OPERATIONAL STATISTICS, PERIOD 1st APRIL, 1944, TO 31st MARCH, 1945

Squadron.	Type of Operational Sortie.							Total Number of Operational Hours.	Total Number of Operational Sorties.
	Strike Attack Intercept.	Bomber Escort.	Patrol Reconnaissance Search.	Rescue.	Convoy Escort.	Supply Dropping, &c.	Miscellaneous.		
B-R Squadrons—									
No. 1	185	19	250	6	98	3	74	1,767	635
No. 2	450	26	317	9	232	12	13	3,223	1,059
No. 3	176	2	636	4	34	..	77	3,391	929
No. 4	85	..	708	2	602	..	65	6,826	1,462
Flying Boat Squadrons—									
No. 5 .. .. .	..	..	297	1	72	..	84	3,069	454
No. 6	6	..	606	43	311	12	147	7,872	1,125
B-R Squadrons—									
No. 8 (formed 1/10/44; disbanded 12/3/45)	120	..	245	..	68	..	76	1,437	509
No. 9	555	..	468	5	..	..	73	2,960	1,101
Fighter Squadrons—									
No. 14	547	18	612	10	18	..	162	3,499	1,367
No. 15	857	..	656	12	30	..	70	4,435	1,625
No. 16	880	17	394	4	49	..	97	4,382	1,441
No. 17	832	8	536	15	15	..	64	4,520	1,470
No. 18	1,116	56	592	26	20	..	50	3,557	1,860
No. 19	971	52	685	..	20	..	12	4,133	1,740
No. 20	1,460	47	757	6	..	..	92	3,857	2,362
No. 21 (formed 21/4/44)	1,507	3	477	..	..	..	69	3,482	2,056
No. 22 (formed 19/6/44)	239	32	820	36	12	..	53	3,705	1,192
No. 23 (formed 7/8/44)	215	22	1,030	..	38	..	55	2,062	1,360
No. 24 (formed 22/9/44)	598	14	248	..	4	..	40	1,611	904
No. 25 (formed 30/10/44)	10	..	634	..	..	..	50	1,239	694
Dive Bomber Squadron: No. 25 (disbanded 19/6/44)	420	..	31	..	..	..	14	1,377	465
Torpedo Bomber Squadrons—									
No. 30 (disbanded 26/6/44)	378	..	5	..	..	..	71	1,277	454
No. 31 (disbanded 1/9/44)	726	..	..	..	..	..	2	1,752	728
Total	12,333	316	11,004	179	1,623	27	1,510	75,433	26,992

No records have been available prior to January, 1945, showing the number of bombs dropped. The records available for January, February, and March, 1945, do not, however, show the number dropped by independent squadrons, but give the figures for the types of aircraft used.

The following shows the total number dropped during January to March inclusive, with also the tonnage (in U.S. lb.):—

Medium Bomber	..	..	Bombs dropped.	4,291	Tonnage.	926
Fighter	..	..	..	4,998	..	2,849

APPENDIX B.—AWARDS

Awards.	Twelve Months ending					Total.
	31st March, 1941.	31st March, 1942.	31st March, 1943.	31st March, 1944.	31st March, 1945.	
Victoria Cross .. .. .	..	1	..	1	..	2
Bar to Distinguished Service Order .. .. .	..	..	..	..	4	4
Distinguished Service Order .. .. .	..	6	9	19	30	64
Conspicuous Gallantry Medal .. .. .	..	..	1	2	2	5
Military Cross .. .. .	..	..	1	..	1	2
Second Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross .. .. .	..	..	..	1	2	3
Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross	2	5	13	16	29	65
Distinguished Flying Cross	62	53	98	202	299	714
Bar to Distinguished Flying Medal .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	1
Distinguished Flying Medal	5	28	45	70	23	171
George Medal	3	..	..	1	1	5
Bar to Air Force Cross .. .. .	..	1	..	1	..	2
Air Force Cross	8	11	8	10	24	61
Air Force Medal .. .. .	..	2	2	..	1	5
British Empire Medal	1	1	2	5	8	17
Military Medal .. .. .	..	..	..	..	2	2
American Distinguished Flying Cross .. .. .	..	..	..	5	9	14
U.S. Air Medal .. .. .	..	..	..	5	6	11
U.S. Legion of Merit .. .. .	..	..	..	..	2	2
Polish Virtute Militari .. .. .	..	..	..	..	2	2
Croix de Guerre (French)	1	..	..	2	1	4
Croix de Guerre (Belgian) .. .. .	..	..	..	1	..	1
Order of Lenin .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	1
Order of Crown of Yugoslavia .. .. .	..	..	2	..	..	2
White Eagle of Yugoslavia .. .. .	..	..	1	..	..	1
Czech War Cross .. .. .	..	..	..	1	..	1
Norwegian War Cross .. .. .	..	..	..	..	1	1
	82	108	184	342	447	*1,163

* Of this total, 927 awards have been won by personnel of the R.N.Z.A.F. and 236 by New-Zealanders serving as members of the R.A.F. In addition, 164 have been Mentioned in Despatches and 10 have been commended.

A total of 30 honours has been granted to R.N.Z.A.F. personnel since the outbreak of war to 31st March, 1945. This total consists of—

Commander of the Order of the British Empire	4
Officer of the Order of the British Empire	9
Member of the Order of the British Empire	17

APPENDIX C.—CASUALTIES

(a) OVERSEAS

From the outbreak of war to 31st March, 1945, 3,998 personnel have been reported as casualties. Additional casualties for the year totalled 936.

The analysis for each year is as follows :—

	Total to 31st March, 1941.	Total to 31st March, 1942.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1943.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1944.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1945.	Increase or Decrease for Year.
Killed or presumed dead	156	529	+373	1,206	+677	2,210	+1,004	2,875	+665
*Missing, believed killed	20	51	+31	175	+124	93	-82	138	+45
*Missing	59	135	+76	307	+172	314	+7	476	+162
*Prisoner of war or interned	50	132	+82	287	+155	445	+158	509	+64
*Missing, believed prisoner of war .. .. .	..	6	+6	26	+20	..	-26	..	..
Total from outbreak of war	285	853	..	2,001	..	3,062	..	3,998	..
Increase for year .. .. .	..	..	568	..	1,148	..	1,061	..	936

* Figures in these categories fluctuate from time to time as personnel are reclassified on receipt of additional information.

Analysis of total casualties from outbreak of war to 31st March, 1945 :—

Killed or presumed dead	2,875
Missing, believed killed	138
Missing	476
Prisoner of war or interned	509
Total	3,998†

In addition, 91 have been reported seriously ill/injured, and remain on the list at 31st March, 1945. The comparative total last year was 77.

† Of this total, 3,648 casualties have been reported to the R.N.Z.A.F. personnel and 350 to New-Zealanders serving with the R.A.F. at the outbreak of war.

(b) NEW ZEALAND

Fatal accidents in New Zealand since the outbreak of war to 31st March, 1945, are as follows :—

	Total to 31st March, 1941.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1942.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1943.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1944.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1945.
Aircraft accidents	25	32	57	39	96	30	126	32	158
Motor and other non-flying accidents	7	4	11	11	22	11	33	11	44
Total from outbreak of war	32	..	68	..	118	..	159	..	202
Increase for year .. .. .	..	36	..	50	..	41	..	43	..

Number of Deaths from Outbreak of War

	Total to 31st March, 1941.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1942.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1943.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1944.	Increase for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1945.
Aircraft accidents	37	57	94	75	169	52	221	44	265*
Motor and other non-flying accidents	7	4	11	11	22	11	33	13	46
Natural causes	5	2	7	14	21	30	51	22	73†
Total from outbreak of war	49	..	112‡	..	212	..	305	..	384
Increase for year .. .. .	..	63	..	100	..	93	..	79	..

* Includes 1 W.A.A.F.

† Includes 6 W.A.A.F.

‡ Amended.

**REPORT OF THE ACTING CONTROLLER OF CIVIL AVIATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31st MARCH, 1945**

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

24th July, 1945.

I HAVE the honour to present herewith my report of the activities of the Civil Aviation Branch for the year ending 31st March, 1945 :—

GENERAL

The administration of the Branch has been particularly difficult during the year, principally because of the inability to obtain qualified Technical Assistants on operational and radio questions. The problem has been partially met by the secondment of Service personnel.

Between October, 1944, and January, 1945, the Acting Controller of Civil Aviation was absent in the United States and Canada attending the International Civil Aviation Conference at Chicago and the Commonwealth Empire Radio for Civil Aviation Conference in Ottawa. Reports on these two Conferences have been submitted.

AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES

On 31st March, 1945, scheduled services were operated over the following routes, which totalled 1,742 miles :—

Route	Operated by	
1. Auckland - Palmerston North - Wellington	} Union Airways of New Zealand, Ltd.	
2. Wellington-Christchurch-Dunedin		
3. Wellington-Blenheim		
4. Wellington-Nelson		
5. Dunedin-Invercargill		
6. Palmerston North - Napier - Gisborne		} Air Travel (N.Z.), Ltd.
7. Gisborne-Auckland		
8. Nelson-Westport-Greymouth-Hokitika		
9. Hokitika-Weheka		
10. Hokitika-Haast-Okuru - Jacksons Bay		

Nine aircraft were employed on these services. 51,754 passengers, 272,251 lb. of freight, and 313,013 lb. of mail were carried. Miles flown totalled 965,787.

TASMAN EMPIRE AIRWAYS

This service between Auckland and Sydney is operated on a basis of three return trips weekly. Traffic statistics are as follows :—

Miles flown	..	..	..	..	..	427,460
Passengers	..	..	..	..	..	5,803
Freight	..	..	..	..	..	84,189 lb.
Mail	..	..	..	..	..	142,812 lb.

I have, &c.,

J. M. BUCKERIDGE,
Acting Controller of Civil Aviation.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (700 copies), £16 10s.

